THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

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SECOND EDITION
REPRINTED IN REVISED FORM
FROM THE BIBLICAL WORLD
JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, 1898

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

To us today the highest value of our gospels is in the testimony they bring us concerning the deeds, words, and character of our Lord Jesus. The ideas and purpose of the author, and even his personal identity, are to us matters of secondary consideration. Nevertheless it is far more than idle curiosity that impels us to discover all that we can concerning the specific purpose with which our evangelists severally wrote. To gain their point of view and read their books, as it were, through their eyes will certainly make them more significant and instructive to us. It is the aim of this paper to give some help toward such a reading of the first gospel. It is a study of the gospel itself, with a view to discovering from its own testimony what its point of view, aim, and plan are. As subsidiary to the search for the purpose and plan of the book, however, the evidence concerning the writer and the readers for whom he wrote must be examined.

I. THE AUTHOR.

The first gospel does not itself name its author, the title coming, not from the hand of the author, but from some later scribe. Nor is the writer's name, as transmitted by tradition, our first concern. External testimony can be best considered after the gospel itself has been studied, and will be but briefly referred to. What we seek first and chiefly is the testimony of the gospel itself, and that concerning, not the name or identity of the writer, but his characteristics and point of view.

1. *His nationality as it appears in the book itself.*—Several classes of facts bear convergent testimony indicating that the writer of the gospel is a Palestinian Jew.

a. Thus he shows himself familiar with the geography of Palestine. See, for example, 2:1, Bethlehem of Judea, distinguished from Bethlehem in the tribe of Zebulun; 2:23, "a city called

Nazareth," a phrase which at first suggests that the place is unfamiliar to the writer and his readers, but is probably intended to call attention to the name and its relation to the reference about to be made to the Old Testament; 3 : 1, "the wilderness of Judea;"[1] 3 : 5, the circuit of the Jordan (*cf.* Gen. 13 : 10); 3 :13, Galilee and the Jordan; 4 : 12, 13, Nazareth and Capernaum, and the relation of these to the ancient tribal boundaries; 4 : 23–25 Galilee and the lands adjacent; 8 : 5, 23, 28, the country of the Gadarenes[2] placed on the opposite side of the Sea of Galilee from Capernaum; 14 : 34, Gennesaret on the Sea of Galilee; 15:21, Tyre and Sidon; 15 : 39, Magadan, though this cannot be certainly identified today; 16 : 13; 17 : 1, Cæsarea Philippi, and the high mountain in that vicinity; 19 : 1, Judea beyond Jordan; 20 : 29, Jericho; 21 : 1, Bethphage (not certainly identified), and the Mount of Olives (*cf.* 24 : 3) near Jerusalem;

[1] Some have found in this expression an inaccurate use of terms, perhaps betraying ignorance of the region. In Judg. 1 : 16 the wilderness of Judah is spoken of as being in the south of Arad. Arad is located by Robinson (*Bib. Res.*, II, 101) and others (*Dict. Bib.*) about sixteen miles south of Hebron. But in Josh. 15 : 61 f. Judah's territory is said to include "in the wilderness" Beth-arabah, Middin, and Secacah. Now Beth-arabah is also mentioned as belonging to Benjamin (Josh. 18 : 22), which indicates that the border between Judah and Benjamin ran through it. The exact site of Beth-arabah is unknown, but the location of the border line is approximately shown by being defined in Josh. 18 : 19 as drawn from the head of the Dead Sea, and as passing through Beth-hoglah, a town which is in the Jordan valley, about two miles north of the sea. This indicates that the wilderness of Judah extended as far north as the head of the Dead Sea, or a little farther. But the region north of this was also desert (see Jos., *B. J.*, III, 10, 7, *fin.; cf.* IV, 8, 2; *cf.* also Mark 1 : 4, 5, which indicates that the Jordan ran through the wilderness), and when the boundary between Judah and Benjamin was no longer marked, and the territory of both tribes included in Judea, as was the case in New Testament times, it is very probable that the term "wilderness of Judea" would cover both the desolate region west of the Dead Sea and so much of the barren region north of the sea as lay within Judea. It must be observed that Matthew does not necessarily include any portion of the Jordan valley in the wilderness of *Judea*. (*Cf.* 3 : 1, 5, 6.) His language would be consistent with an intention to represent John's preaching as beginning in the wilderness of Judea, and as being transferred to the Jordan valley when he began to baptize (*cf.* again Mark 1 : 4, 5, which uses the term "wilderness" without the addition of Judea). But it is, perhaps, more probable that he intended the term "wilderness of Judea" to cover both regions.

[2] The phenomena presented by Matt. 8 : 28 and the parallel passages, Mark 5 : 1; Luke 8 : 26, have not been explained in a wholly satisfactory way. In each of the gospels there is manuscript authority for all three readings—Gadarenes, Gerasenes,

21 : 17; 26 : 6, Bethany. It must be remembered, of course, that these references may be in part derived from a documentary source employed by the writer—many of them are found also in Mark—and that all of them are possible to one who was not himself a Palestinian; yet as part of a cumulative argument they are not without value.

b. The author is familiar with Jewish history, customs, and classes of people, and with Jewish ideas. Thus in 1 : 18 f. he shows his acquaintance with the fact that betrothal could be annulled only by divorce; 2 : 4, with the position of the scribes, as those to whom a question about the doctrine of the Messiah would be referred; 2 : 1, with the reign of Herod the Great; 2 : 22, with the fact that Archelaus succeeded him in Judea, but not in Galilee, and with the reputation of Archelaus for cruelty;[3]

Gergesenes. The revisers follow Westcott and Hort in adopting Gadarenes in Matthew, Gerasenes in Mark, and Gerasenes (marg. Gergesenes, with Tisch.) in Luke. The conditions of the narrative are fulfilled on the eastern shore, near a town called Khersa or Gersa, situated on the left bank of the Wady Semakh; the ancient name of this town may have been Gergesa (ORIGEN, IV, 140, apparently referring to this site, gives Gergesa as the name), or possibly Gerasa (the frequency of the name Jerash today—CONDER in *Dict. Bib.*, Rev. Eng. Ed., I, 1162—suggests that Gerasa was a common name in ancient times). It is doubtless to this place that the names Gerasenes and Gergesenes refer; the former can in any case scarcely refer to the well-known Gerasa, thirty-five miles distant from the lake. The reading Gadarenes, it should be observed, does not involve the statement that the event took place at Gadara, which, lying six miles from the lake and south of the Jarmuk, is an impossible site, but in the country of the Gadarenes, *i. e.*, in the district attached to Gadara. This district, called Gadaritis by Josephus (*B. J.*, III, 10, 10; *cf.* III, 3, 1), is proved by coins to have extended to the Sea of Galilee (SCHÜRER, Div. II, Vol. I, p. 104), but does not seem to have included the site of Khersa, since Hippos with its district lies between (*Pal. Exp. Fund Quarterly*, 1887, pp. 36 ff.; SMITH, *Hist. Geog.*, p. 459). If, therefore, Matthew wrote Gadarenes, it must have been either with the intention of assigning the event to the southeastern shore of the sea, where, however, there is said to be no site fulfilling the conditions (WILSON in *Dict. Bib.*, Rev. Eng. Ed., I, 1099), or as a loose and general designation of the country along the southern half of the eastern shore, although the particular site belonged to the district of Hippos or to Gaulanitis, rather than to Gadaritis. In either case the reading Gadarenes, while it may indicate ignorance of the exact location of the event, shows at least general acquaintance with the geography of the region adjacent to the Sea of Galilee.

[3] There is a noticeable difference between Matthew's references to the political situation of Palestine and Luke's. Luke speaks with the air of painstaking investigation; Matthew with that of easy familiarity, all the more noteworthy that the frequent and somewhat complicated succession of rulers would have made error easy.

14:1, with the title of Herod Antipas, tetrarch[4] of Galilee; 26:3, 57, with the name of the high priest; 26:59, with the existence and character of the Sanhedrin; 27:2, 11, 13, with the relation of the Jewish to the Roman authorities, and with the name of the Roman procurator. Here, also, though no single item of the evidence is decisive, the whole is not without significance.

c. The writer is familiar with the Old Testament, and believes in it as a book containing divinely given prophecies. The first section of the book, with its title characterizing Christ as son of David and son of Abraham, and the genealogical table, taken in part from the Old Testament, and designed to prove that Jesus was descended from David and Abraham, as in accordance with prophecy the Messiah must be, show both a familiarity with the Old Testament and a thoroughly Jewish way of looking at it. The structure of this table itself points in the same direction, showing that it is, to the writer, a matter of interest, if not also of argument, that the generations from Abraham to Moses are (by virtue of slight omissions and double counting) divisible into three groups of fourteen (twice seven) generations, a fact which suggests that the Messiah appeared at an appropiate time, at the end of three periods, the culmination of each of the two preceding of which had been marked by a great event of Jewish history. Throughout the gospel, but especially in the early and later parts, he calls attention to passages of the Old Testament which he interprets as finding their fulfilment in events of Jesus' life (1:22 f.; 2:6, 15, 17 f., 23; 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 13:35; 21:4 f.; 27:9). These eleven passages, most of them introduced by the formula, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet," sometimes with the insertion of the phrase "by the Lord," are a marked feature of this gospel. They are a special contribution of this evangelist, having no parallel passages in Mark or

[4] Mark 6:14 is less exact, since Herod was not, strictly speaking, king.

In 14:3, it has been alleged, Matthew wrongly designates the brother of Herod whose wife he had married as Philip, whereas Philip was really the husband of Salome; but it is by no means certain that there is an error here. *Cf.* Mark 6:17 and commentaries on both passages; also note 4, p. 2, "Purpose and Plan of Mark."

Luke.[5] Nor, with the exception of Mark 1 : 2 and Luke 3 : 4 ff., parallel to Matt. 3 : 3, are there any similar passages in the other synoptic gospels. They show in the clearest way the author's special interest in the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament and in their fulfilment in Jesus; the conception of the Old Testament and the method of interpreting it which they reveal, though not impossible to a gentile Christian as an acquisition from others, were certainly developed on Jewish soil. That we have, in this particular case, to do with a mind itself Jewish is placed almost beyond doubt by the fact that, though the quotations from the Old Testament which are common to our first three gospels, nearly all of which occur in the words of Jesus, show a predominant influence of the Greek version of the Old Testament, this group of eleven peculiar to the first evangelist clearly shows a predominant influence of the original Hebrew. And this is the more significant in view of the fact that in the one instance in which the three synoptists unite in quoting a passage and speak of its fulfilment (Matt. 3 : 3; Mark 1 : 2; Luke 3 : 4 ff., referring Isa. 40: 3 to John the Baptist) they agree in a form of the passage which clearly shows the influence of the Septuagint.

d. In various other ways the writer betrays his Jewish feeling and point of view. He employs descriptive names derived from the Old Testament which would be unnatural in the mouth of any but a Jew, and which are, in fact, found nowhere else in the New Testament, save in the case of one phrase in the book of Revelation. See 2 : 20, 21, land of Israel; 4 : 5; 27 : 53, holy city (*cf.* Rev. 11 : 2); 5 : 35, city of the great king; 10 : 6; 15 : 24, lost sheep of the house of Israel. He speaks of the half-shekel tax which every adult male Jew paid annually for the support of the temple (*cf.* Exod. 30 : 13–16), simply by the name of the coin that paid it, the two-drachma piece, following in this a usage probably common among the Jews.[6] His tone

[5] Nor in John, save that 21 : 4 f. is paralleled in John 12 : 14 f., and 8 : 17 partially in John 1 : 29. Matt. 4 : 16 has a partial parallel in Luke 1 : 79.

[6] Concerning the variation in the amount of the tax, see Exod. 30 : 13; Neh. 10 : 32; concerning the ratio of the shekel and drachma, and the coins in use in New Testament times, see MADDEN, *Coinage of the Jews*, pp. 290 f., 294; BENZINGER, *Hebräische Archäologie*, p. 193; SCHÜRER, II, I, pp. 41, 250 f.; JOS., *Ant.*, III, 8, 2; XVIII, 8.

in speaking of gentiles (5:47; 6:7, 32; 18:17) is decidedly Jewish, the name "gentile" being evidently with him not simply a designation of nationality, but a characterization nearly equivalent to our modern term "heathen." He is particularly interested in those teachings of Jesus which are of special significance to the Jew and the Jewish Christian. Thus it is in this gospel only that we have Jesus' word concerning the permanence of the law (5:17–19); the Sermon on the mount as given here preserves the comparison of Jesus' teaching with that of the Pharisees, and, indirectly, with that of the Old Testament (chaps. 5–7), an element wholly absent from the similar discourse in Luke (6:20–49); this gospel alone tells us that the personal mission of Jesus and the work of his apostles on their first separate mission tour were limited to the Jews (10:6; 15:24); it gives special emphasis to Jesus' denunciation of the Pharisees (15:13; 21:28–32; chap. 23), and is our only authority for the most striking of his sayings concerning the impending doom of the nation (8:11, 12; 21:43; 22:7, are found only in Matt.; *cf.*, also, 12:38–45; 23:35, 36; 24:2, of which there are parallels in Mark or Luke, and 27:25, peculiar to Matt.). Here are elements which seem at first sight contradictory, but they all bespeak an author especially concerned with the relations of the gospel to Judaism.

2. *The author's religious position.*—Evident as it is that our evangelist is a Jew by nationality and education, it is still more clear that he is a Christian—a Jew who, holding the messianic hope of his people and believing that there are messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, finds that hope realized and those prophecies fulfilled in Jesus. Passages need hardly be cited. The first line of the gospel shows the author's position, and it appears throughout the book. The question whether he was also a Judaizing Christian believing in the permanent authority of the statute law of the Old Testament for both Jewish and gentile Christian, or perhaps for the Jewish Christian, but not for his gentile brother, can be answered only on the basis of a study of the purpose of the book. (See III.)

3. *The testimony of tradition.*—This comes to us in—

a. The title which the gospel bears in ancient manuscripts. This is uniformly *Κατα Μαθθαιον*, "According to Matthew," *Ευαγγελιον κατα Μαθθαιον*, or equivalent phrase.

b. The statements of the Fathers. These constantly connect the gospel with Matthew, sometimes expressly describing him as the publican or the apostle. The earliest of these testimonies is that

"Matthew accordingly composed the oracles [sayings] in the Hebrew dialect, and each one interpreted them as he was able." (EUSEBIUS, *H. E.*, iii, 39, quoting from Papias.)

Later writers frequently repeat this assertion that Matthew wrote in Hebrew, yet accept our Greek gospel as Matthew's, many of them having apparently no direct acquaintance with the Hebrew book. In the third century and later several Hebrew gospels were known, the testimony of those who had seen them showing that they resembled our Matthew, but were not identical with it. That any of them was the original Hebrew Matthew is improbable. The whole evidence, confused though it is, leaves no room for doubt that our first gospel is connected with the apostle Matthew, but the precise nature of the relation must be determined largely by the close comparative study of the first three gospels in the light of the literary methods of the time. Meantime it is to be observed that if the apostle was the author of one of the sources of the book rather than of the book itself, and if the gospel received its present form from some other author, the latter also is shown by the evidence of the gospel itself to be a Jewish Christian, thoroughly imbued alike with belief in the Old Testament and with faith in Christ as the Messiah. His religious position, as well as his ability as an author, will become more clear from the evidence still to be examined under III, IV, and V.

II. THE READERS FOR WHOM THE BOOK WAS PRIMARILY INTENDED.

Much of the evidence bearing upon this question is derived from the same passages which have already been cited to show the nationality of the writer.

1. Not much stress can be laid on the writer's apparent assumption that his readers are familiar with Palestinian geography. The

other gospels which on other grounds are shown to have been written specially for gentiles apparently make the same assumption, or rather, perhaps, are equally unconcerned that their readers should understand their geographical references. There are even some passages in Matthew which seem to assume that his readers were not acquainted with the smaller Palestinian towns. In 2:23, indeed, the phrase "a city called Nazareth" is probably used simply to call attention to the name in anticipation of the next sentence, and in 4:13 a similar motive leads to the mention of the location of Capernaum; but the placing of the healing of the demoniacs in the country of the Gadarenes, if this be the correct reading, seems to imply that he could not assume that his readers would be acquainted with the little town Khersa, and, therefore, located the event more generally in the *country* of the Gadarenes, or else that he himself was unacquainted with the smaller place (*cf.* note 2). Beyond this the geographical evidence is purely negative.

2. Though a general acquaintance with Jewish customs and institutions on the part of the reader is assumed in all of the gospels, and hence does not of itself point to Jewish readers, yet the extent of this in the first gospel is worthy of notice. Compare, for example, Matthew's references to the Jewish rulers (2:1, 22; 14:1) with Luke's (2:1, 2; 3:1, 2), or his unexplained mention of the Jewish custom of ceremonial cleansing (13:2) with Mark's detailed explanation (7:3, 4). The seeming exception in 27:15 is not properly such. The custom of releasing a prisoner at the Passover season, not otherwise known to us, was probably not of Jewish but of Roman origin, and since the government of Judea had changed several times in the generation or more between the death of Jesus and the writing of the gospel, it is probable that the custom had so long ago ceased that even to Jews it was a matter of unfamiliar history.

3. The number of argumentative quotations from the Old Testament introduced by the writer, and the almost total absence of such quotations from Mark and Luke—John has more than Mark and Luke, but fewer than Matthew—suggest also Jewish readers. It is certainly not decisive evidence, since arguments

from Scripture early became the common property of Christians, both Jewish and gentile. The extent and prominence of the Scripture argument count for something, but the decisive word must be said on the basis of the *nature* of the argument which this gospel founds on its quotations. (See III.)

4. The use of Jewish descriptive titles (see the passages cited under I, I, *d*), the reporting of the words of Jesus which emphasize his mission to the Jews (10:5, 6; 15:24), and of other teachings which would be of special interest to Jews (11:14; 12:5, 6; 17:24; 23:16–22—all peculiar to this gospel), and the fact that the great discourses of Jesus, notably the Sermon on the mount (chaps. 5–7), are reported in a form adapted to Jewish thinking, are of more decisive significance, and all indicate that the writer has in mind mainly Jewish readers. Still more significant, though here also the full significance will appear only in relation to the purpose of the book, are the passages referred to above which foreshadow the downfall of Judaism (8:11, 12; 12:38–45; 21:43; 22:1–14; 23:35, 36; 24:2; 27:25). The use of the term "gentiles" as a designation of religion rather than of nationality (5:47, etc.) suggests the same thing, but is shown by I Cor. 5:1; 10:20; 12:2, to be possible in a writing addressed directly to gentile Christians; its occurrence, therefore, tends only to indicate that the book was not intended for non-Christian gentiles. The use of the term "Jews" (28:15) in the way so common in the fourth gospel is not only a mark of the Christian point of view of the Jewish writer, but tends in some degree to indicate that he wrote for those who, though Jews in nationality, now distinguished themselves from the rest of the nation by their Christianity.

III. THE PURPOSE WITH WHICH THE EVANGELIST WROTE.

Alike the material and the general structure of the book suggest that we have to do here with a work which is in a sense historical or biographical. The material is mainly narrative in form, consisting of reports of deeds done and discourses uttered on certain occasions, not of discussion or formal argument by the writer of the book. It is a history, however, which gathers

around the person of Jesus; only such events and persons as stand in immediate relation to him are spoken of, and these only in so far as they are related to him. The book falls into six main parts (*cf.* the analysis at the end of this article), representing periods of the life of Jesus and arranged in chronological order, from his birth to his resurrection.

Yet before it is decided that, because the material is of a biographical character and the main structure chronological, therefore the end of the writer is attained when he has given an historically correct representation of the life of Jesus, or even, perhaps, when he has told such facts about the life of Jesus as are known to him, certain other considerations must be taken into account. It must be remembered that it was in accordance with the literary method of the first Christian century and of the adjacent periods to employ historical material for argumentative purposes, and that, too, without casting the material into the form of an argument or even stating anywhere in the course of the narrative what the facts were intended to prove. It was assumed that the reader or hearer would be shrewd enough to discover this for himself, and this assumption was apparently amply justified.

This use of historical material for argumentative purposes, this clothing of argument in narrative form, finds several clear illustrations in the New Testament. In the discourse of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, as related in Luke 4:16–30, Jesus replies to the thought of the Nazarenes, which they have not even openly expressed, by relating two events from Old Testament history; he does not state what these events prove, and modern interpreters are somewhat puzzled to tell precisely what he intended to prove by them. But there is no doubt that he intended that they should teach something not directly expressed in them, and that the Nazarene congregation so understood him. The speeches in the book of Acts are almost all of them of the same character, from the speech of Peter on the day of Pentecost down to the later speeches of Paul. The two best illustrations are furnished by the speech of Stephen before the council, which is very evidently of argumentative purpose, yet which leaves the

purpose so entirely unstated that most readers today probably entirely fail to perceive it, and the speech of Paul at Pisidian Antioch, which has the same characteristics, only less strongly marked. The fourth gospel furnishes an illustration of a book almost wholly made up of narrative material (including in that term conversations and discourses assigned to certain occasions), yet explicitly stated by the writer to have been written with the purpose of convincing men of a certain doctrinal proposition, this again for the purpose of producing a certain moral result (20:30, 31). The book of Acts also, though the writer has not stated a definite argumentative purpose, is almost universally admitted to have been written for such a purpose; precisely what the purpose was interpreters still dispute.

In view of this well-established literary custom, of which there are abundant examples in the New Testament literature itself, it is only natural to ask whether our gospel also gives evidence of such a purpose on the part of its writer. Such evidence does, in fact, appear the moment we carry our study of the structure of the book beyond a division into its six main parts. The first main division, though including only material pertaining to the ancestry, birth, and infancy of Jesus, yet makes an evidential use of every event which it relates, pointing out how in each of the narrated facts Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus. The Galilean ministry is scarcely less evidently constructed on a plan which is more logical than chronological, the whole constituting an exposition of the nature of the kingdom of heaven, the way in which it must be received, and the way in which the Jews did actually receive it, foreshadowing their rejection of the Messiah, and their own consequent downfall (*cf.* the analysis under v). The passion week, though the material is, with a few significant exceptions, apparently arranged on a chronological plan, is yet so treated as to present the evidence for the fact that Christ and his kingdom were explicitly and clearly presented to the Jews for their acceptance, with warning of the consequences to them of rejection, and that in the face of such presentation and such warning they definitely rejected Christ and the kingdom.

But if the book has an argumentative purpose, which is either the dominant one or one which is coördinate with a more distinctly historical aim, precisely what is it that the author conceives his narrative to prove and of which he wishes to convince his readers? The answer must be gained by observing on what the writer lays emphasis. Notice, then, what the passages already cited have in part shown, the characteristic ideas of this gospel. The writer believes in the Old Testament, and holds that its messianic prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus (1:23, etc.); Jesus himself held to the divine and permanent authority of the Old Testament ethical teaching (5:17 ff.; 15:3 ff., etc.), though indirectly criticising the statutory legislation or affirming its temporary character (5:21–48 *passim;* 9:14–17; 15:10–20; 19:8); he addressed himself to the Jews, announced the near approach of the kingdom of heaven, adapted his instruction to their point of view (see all the discourses); limited his own personal mission to them (15:24), and instructed his disciples when he sent them out to do the same (10:5, 6); when, despite the fact that multitudes followed him and true disciples were won, it became evident that the leaders of the people would reject him, he warned them of the danger of such rejection (8:11, 12; 12:38–45; *cf.* the words of John the Baptist, 3:9), and as opposition grew and approached its culmination in the determination to put him to death, he scathingly rebuked the Pharisees, under whose influence the nation was rejecting its Messiah (chap. 23, esp. vs. 13), announced with increasing distinctness the direful results of such rejection to the nation and to Judaism itself, even definitely declaring the rejection of the nation by God (see 21:33–46; 22:1–14; but especially 21:42, 43; 22:7; 23:36, 38; 24:2); and finally, after his final rejection, his death and triumphant resurrection, he commissioned his disciples, no longer to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel only, but to make disciples of all nations (28:19).

These are characteristics which are not common to all our gospels; they are, in large part, peculiar to Matthew. And they reveal as the motive of this argument in narrative form the

purpose to prove that Jesus is the true Messiah of the Jews; that he announced and founded the kingdom of God, expounding its true nature, and setting forth its relation to the Old Testament religion; that he came, first of all, to the Jewish nation; that, when they showed signs of a disposition not to receive his message, he warned them that the consequence of such rejection would be that the kingdom would be taken from them; that, in fact, they did in the face of all this warning and instruction reject Jesus and put him to death; and that, consequently, the kingdom ceased to be in any distinctive sense Jewish, and in place of the old national dispensation there was created by Jesus himself, the true Jewish Messiah, a kingdom of all nations; thus, universal Christianity, freed from all national restrictions or peculiarly Jewish institutions, becomes the true successor of the Old Testament religion; the true Jew must be a follower of Jesus, and, in consequence, leave Judaism behind.

It is important to perceive clearly all the elements of this purpose. The author's aim is by no means attained when he has advanced evidence that Jesus is the Messiah. He reaches his goal only when, with this as the first step of his argument, he has shown that Jesus the Messiah founded a kingdom of universal scope, abolishing all Jewish limitations.

IV. OTHER PROBLEMS IN THE LIGHT OF THE PURPOSE.

If this is a correct exposition of the specific aim of the book, it affords help in answering several other questions. Thus it gives a more definite answer to the inquiry concerning the readers especially in the writer's mind (*cf.* II). It becomes clear that the book was intended, not for Jews as such, but *for Jewish Christians.* Were the book designed simply to prove the messiahship of Jesus, it might be supposed to be addressed to unconverted Jews, and intended to persuade them to accept Jesus as the Christ. But if the argument for the messiahship of Jesus is but the first step of the whole, and if the ultimate purpose is to convince the reader, on historical grounds, that Christianity is not a national but a universal religion, that the old limitations of Judaism, though valid in their own time, have, by

the Jewish rejection of the Messiah, been broken down, this is evidently a line of thought which would be addressed to a Christian, either to persuade him to abandon his narrow Judaistic type of Christianity, or to dissuade him from turning back from Christianity to Judaism itself. Were the book less careful to recognize the legitimacy of the Old Testament, and the primary mission of Jesus to the Jews, and, in general, to adapt its argument to the Jewish point of view, its contention for a universal Christianity might seem to point to gentile Christians as the readers whom the writer had in mind. But faced, as it constantly is, to the thought of the Jew, such a destination for the book is excluded.

But while intended for Jewish Christian readers, the book is emphatically *not of a Judaistic cast.* It is even more directly opposed to the Judaizing type of Christianity than most of the writings of Paul which deal with that question. The apostle to the gentiles confined himself for the most part to defending the right of the gentiles to believe in Jesus and enter into all the privileges of Christians without becoming subject to the law. Of course, the logic of this position involved a like freedom ultimately for the Jew, and Paul could, on occasion, insist upon this (Gal. 2:15–19; Eph. 2:14–16), yet always *for the sake of* the gentile, whose interests he, as the apostle of the gentile, was concerned to defend. But this gospel, addressed to Jewish Christians, shows from the teaching and conduct of Jesus that for the Jew also the old régime has ended; the nation that rejected the Messiah is itself rejected; its temple, the center of ritual and worship, is overthrown; its house is left unto it desolate; the kingdom of God is taken from it and given unto a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof; the Old Testament foundation of the kingdom is not for a moment repudiated, but on the basis of the teaching of the Old Testament and of the words of Jesus the Christ, the Christian church, drawn from all nations and having no special relation to the temple or Judaism, is shown to be the inheritor ot the kingdom.

In the light of this purpose of the book, its *unity* is clearly evident. From the assertion in its first verse that Jesus is the

Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, to the commission which in its closing paragraph this Christ, now risen from the dead, gives to his apostles to make disciples of all nations, one thought dominates it. This is no patchwork put together by several hands working with different conceptions, or by one editor whose only thought was to include all the evangelic material that he possessed. The writer may have employed as sources of his book other gospel writings; the resemblance of some of the material to that which is contained in the other gospels seems to show that he had such sources; but, whether so or not, he has wrought all his material into a real book, with a definite course of thought and a clearly defined aim.

Nor can it be doubted that the writer had before him *a definite situation*, a practical problem to solve, not a merely theoretical proposition to prove. He is a man of thought, even of a reflective turn of mind; but his book is far from being a mere meditative study. Though so different in form and style, it reminds us by its purpose of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which was written to those who, having received the knowledge of the truth, were in danger of drawing back and of not holding fast the confession of their faith (Heb. 10:19–39). There is much to suggest that our evangelist wrote not, indeed, for the same persons, but for those who were subject to a similar danger. Was it, perhaps, for those who, having till now held fast to Judaism, only adding to it faith in Jesus as the Messiah, but now seeing the near approach of the destruction of Jerusalem, or possibly, having already witnessed it, were in danger of surrendering their Christianity under the influence of the blow which had fallen upon Judaism, and the argument that he was surely not the Messiah who could not avert such disaster from his own people? To save them from this danger it would be needful to separate Judaism and Christianity in their minds; while confirming their faith in Jesus as the Christ of prophecy, to show them that he had himself announced precisely that which was now happening, and had in anticipation of it founded a Christianity which was at the same time the legitimate successor of the Old Testament religion and free from its national

restrictions. But whether it was the destruction of Jerusalem, impending or already past, which furnished the immediate occasion for the book or not, it seems impossible to doubt that it was written primarily to convince Jewish Christians that the religion of Jesus was not merely the Judaism of the temple, *plus* a belief in Jesus as the Messiah, but a world-religion, freed from all bounds and restrictions that were local and national. It carries the doctrine of the apostle Paul to the conclusion which Paul saw to be involved in it, but to which he was not wont himself to press it.

V. THE PLAN OF THE GOSPEL.

The following is an attempt to exhibit the plan of the book as it lay in the writer's mind:

ANALYSIS OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

I. THE BIRTH AND INFANCY OF JESUS. The Advent of the Messiah in accordance with prophecy.	chaps, 1, 2
1. The genealogy of Jesus, showing his Abrahamic and Davidic descent.	1:1–17
2. The annunciation to Joseph, and the birth of Jesus from the virgin, as prophesied.	1:18–25
3. The visit of the Magi, giving occasion to the testimony of the Jewish doctors that Bethlehem was the prophesied birthplace of the Messiah.	2:1–12
4. The flight into Egypt, fulfilling prophecy.	2:13–15
5. The murder of the children of Bethlehem, fulfilling prophecy.	2:16–18
6. The return from Egypt and removal to Nazareth, fulfilling prophecy.	2:19–23
II. PREPARATION FOR THE PUBLIC WORK OF JESUS. Events preparatory to the founding of the kingdom.	3:1—4:11
1. The preparatory ministry of John the Baptist, in accordance with prophecy.	3:1–12
2. The baptism of Jesus, accompanied by the descent of the Spirit and the voice from heaven.	3:13–17
3. The temptation in the wilderness, settling the principles on which his work was to be done.	4:1–11
III. THE MINISTRY IN GALILEE. The kingdom founded and its fundamental principles set forth.	4:12—18:35
1. The beginning of Jesus' work in Galilee.	4:12–25
a. The removal to Capernaum and the beginning of preaching.	4:12–17

b. The call of the Four to evangelistic work.	4:18–22
c. Jesus' early work in Galilee; his widespread fame.	4:23–25
2. The Sermon on the mount;[7] the ethical principles of the kingdom.	chaps. 5–7
3. A group of events, each of which either illustrates or attests the authority which in the sermon he has assumed.	8:1—9:34
a. A leper cleansed.	8:1–4
b. The centurion's servant healed.	8:5–13
c. Peter's wife's mother healed.	8:14–18
d. Answers to disciples about following him.	8:19–22
e. The stilling of the tempest.	8:23–27
f. The Gadarene demoniacs.	8:28–34
g. A paralytic healed and his sins forgiven.[8]	9:1–8
h. The call of Matthew.	9:9–13
i. Answer concerning fasting.	9:14–17
j. A ruler's daughter raised, and a woman healed.	9:18–26
k. Two blind men and a dumb demoniac healed.	9:27–34
4. Discourse to the Twelve on sending them out; the proclamation of the kingdom.	9:35—10:42
5. Events showing the attitude of various persons toward the gospel, and teaching concerning the spirit in which the gospel must be received.	chaps. 11, 12
a. Jesus' answer to the message from John the Baptist.	11:1–6
b. The captious spirit of the Jews condemned by Jesus.	11:7–19
c. Woes against the cities which had not repented at the preaching of Jesus.	11:20–24
d. The thanksgiving of Jesus that the gospel is plain to the simple-minded, and his invitation to the heavy-laden.	11:25–30
e. Plucking grain on the sabbath; the bigotry of the Pharisees rebuked.	12:1–8
f. Healing of the withered hand on the sabbath; bigotry issuing in murderous purpose.	12:9–14
g. Jesus heals many; the gentleness of his ministry.	12:15–21
h. Jesus heals a blind and dumb demoniac; the Pharisees charge him with collusion with Satan, and Jesus warns them of the danger of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.	12:22–37
i. The Pharisees seek a sign; Jesus' answer.	12:38–42

[7] It is worthy of notice that each alternate section of this Part III (see 2, 4, 6, 8) is a discourse of Jesus: all of these discourses treat of the kingdom of heaven, and together constitute an exposition of the kingdom in its various phases.

[8] Note here the relation implied between power and authority.

j. The man from whom the unclean spirit has gone out; a parable of the Jewish nation. 12:43–45
k. The real basis of relationship to Christ. 12:46–50

6. Discourse of parables, chiefly concerning the growth of the kingdom. 13:1–52
7. The events of the latter part of the Galilean ministry, illustrating especially the increasing unbelief and opposition of the Pharisees, and the instruction of the disciples, particularly from 16:21[9] on, in preparation for his death. 13:53—17:27

a. The unbelief of the Nazarenes. 13:53–58
b. The death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod. 14:1–12
c. The feeding of the five thousand. 14:13–22
d. Jesus walking on the water, and Peter's attempt to do so. 14:23–36
e. Eating with unwashen hands; the Pharisees' criticism, and Jesus' answer. 15:1–20
f. The faith of a Canaanitish woman. 15:21–28
g. A multitude healed by the Sea of Galilee. 15:29–31
h. The feeding of the four thousand. 15:32–39
i. Pharisees and Sadducees demand a sign; Jesus' answer. 16:1–4
j. The leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees; Jesus' warning and the slowness of the disciples to understand. 16:5–12
k. Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah. 16:13–20
l. Jesus begins to instruct his disciples concerning his death and resurrection. 16:21–28

[9] Chap. 16:21 marks an epoch which is in a sense more important than that indicated at 19:1, and there is certainly something to be said for the view that the author meant to mark here the beginning of a new division of his book and of a new period of the work of Jesus, characterized by the preparation of his disciples for his death, as the ministry up to this time had been mainly devoted to the proclamation of the kingdom to the people (*cf.* 4:17, and notice the similarity of the phrase to that used in 16:21). Yet, on the whole, it seems probable that the great divisions of the book are made on the basis of external characteristics, mainly geographical. The periods thus made are marked in general by distinctive internal characteristics also. In the case of the close of the Galilean ministry, however, the change in internal characteristics antedates somewhat the change of place. At the time denoted by 16:21 it is already clear that he must die at the hands of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; and, moreover, that the minds of his disciples must be prepared for this event. From this time on, the evangelist indicates, this preparation fills a prominent place in Jesus' work, and his face is in a sense toward Jerusalem, where he is to die. The change in the character of his teaching and the change of place both result from the same cause; yet it is not unnatural that the former should precede the latter by a brief interval.

m. The transfiguration, wherein Jesus is declared to be the Son of God 17:1–13
n. The epileptic boy healed. 17:14–21
o. Jesus again foretells his death. 17:22, 23
p. The payment of the temple tax and Jesus' instruction of Peter concerning relation to the temple worship. 17:24–27

8. Discourse on ambition, humility, and forgiveness; the personal relations of the citizens of the kingdom to one another. chap. 18

IV. JOURNEY THROUGH PEREA TO JERUSALEM. Jesus continues the instruction of his disciples, especially, in the latter part, concerning his death. chaps. 19, 20

1. The departure from Galilee. 19:1, 2
2. Answer to questions concerning divorce. 19:3–12
3. Christ blesses little children, and reproves his disciples. 19:13–15
4. Answer to the rich young man concerning eternal life. 19:16–22
5. Instruction to the disciples concerning riches as an obstacle to entrance into the kingdom. 19:23–26
6. Concerning the rewards of discipleship. 19:27—20:16
7. Jesus foretells his crucifixion. 20:17–19
8. The ambition of James and John, and Jesus' answer concerning suffering and rewards in his service. 20:20–28
9. The two blind men near Jericho, who hail Jesus as son of David. 20:29–34

V. THE CLOSING MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM. [Passion week.] The last offer of the Messiah to the nation and the final rejection. chaps. 21–27

1. Symbolic proclamation of himself as the Messiah. 21:1–17
   a. The triumphal entry. 21:1–11
   b. The cleansing of the temple. 21:12–17
2. Symbolic prediction to the disciples of the rejection of the nation. 21:18–22
3. The mutual rejection. The Jews resist the claim of Jesus; he reiterates warning and prediction. 21:23—23:39
   a. The Jews' challenge of his authority to cleanse the temple, and his answer to them. 21:23–27
   b. Three parables of warning. 21:28—22:14
      a) The parable of the two sons. 21:28–32
      b) The parable of the husbandmen, predicting the rejection of the nation. 21:33–46
      c) The parable of the marriage of the king's son. 22:1–14
   c. Three questions of the Jewish rulers. 22:15–40
      a) Concerning paying tribute. 22:15–22

b) Concerning the resurrection. 22:23–33
c) Concerning the greatest commandment. 22:34–40
d. Jesus' question concerning the Christ. 22:41–46
e. Jesus' great discourse against the Pharisees. chap. 23
4. Prophetic discourse to the disciples concerning the end of the nation and the end of the age. chaps. 24, 25
5. Preparation for the death of Jesus. 26:1–46
a. By his enemies; the plot to put him to death. 26:1–5
b. By his friends; the anointing. 26:6–13
c. By Judas; the bargain to betray him. 26:14–16
d. By Jesus himself. 26:17–46
a) The last supper. 26:17–30
b) The warning to the disciples. 26:31–35
c) The prayer and the agony. 26:36–46
6. The consummation of the rejection of Jesus by the Jews. 26:47—27:66
a. The arrest. 26:47–56
b. The trial. 26:57—27:31
c. The crucifixion and the death. 27:32–56
d. The burial. 27:57–61
e. The watch at the tomb. 27:62–66

VI. THE APPEARANCE OF JESUS AFTER THE RESURRECTION. The triumph of the Messiah over his enemies and the commission of the disciples to win all nations to him. chap. 28
1. The appearance on the resurrection morning. 28:1–10
2. The report of the watch; attempt of the Jews to suppress the evidence. 28:11–15
3. The appearance in Galilee; the commission of the disciples. 28:16–20